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Written statement* submitted by European Centre for Law and Justice, The / Centre Europeen pour le droit, les Justice et les droits de l'homme, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[13 August 2018]

* Issued as received, in the language(s) of submission only.

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Requesting that the U.N. Recognise and Put an End to the Attrocities Being Carried Out Against Christians in Nigeria

1. Introduction

Increasingly, Nigeria has become home to radical groups that seek to eliminate Christianity from the country. These groups are Boko Haram and the Fulani Herdsmen. The governor of the north-eastern Nigerian state of Borno, Kashim Shettima, estimates that '[t]he Boko Haram insurgency has led to the deaths of almost 100,000 persons' with '2,114,000 persons [having] become internally displaced as [of] December of 2016, . . . 537,815 in separate camps' and another '158,201 . . . at official camps'[1].

In addition to the deadly attacks by Boko Haram, there are reports of growing conflict in the central regions of Nigeria between the predominately Muslim Fulani Herdsman and the predominately Christian farmers. The Fulani Herdsman are attacking Christian farmers, destroying homes and churches, and even kidnapping Christian school girls in order to marry them to Muslim men. It is estimated that since 2001 approximately 60,000 Christians have been killed at the hands of the Fulani Herdsmen[2].

We respectfully call to this Council's attention that, pursuant to the Charter of the United Nations, the very purpose of the United Nations is to 'maintain international peace and security, and to that end: to *take effective collective measures for the prevention and removal of threats to the peace*, and for the suppression of acts of aggression . . .'[3]. In addition, under the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide ('Genocide Convention'), '[a]ny Contracting Party may call upon the competent organs of the United Nations to take such action under the Charter of the United Nations as they consider appropriate for the *prevention and suppression of acts of genocide*'[4].

Groups such as the Fulani Herdsman and Boko Haram pose a very real and present danger to Christians – not only in Nigeria, but neighbouring Chad as well. If we fail to act now, the situation within Nigeria will only worsen. More Christians will be killed and many more will become displaced as the violent attacks force them to leave their homes in order to find safety.

2. Background

Despite Nigeria being 40% Christian and 50% Muslim, Christians in the Northern region are a very small minority and are greatly outnumbered by Muslims, some of whom are bent on eliminating Christianity from the region[5].

On 6 June 2014 Boko Haram conducted an altogether new and outrageously heinous attack directly and solely aimed at Christians. Members of Boko Haram disguised themselves as preachers and brutally gunned down 45 Christians as they gathered for church[6].

On 13 January 2015 the city of Baga in Nigeria was overrun and ravaged by Boko Haram insurgents, who left 2,000 dead and caused 35,000 to be displaced. The entire city was destroyed, including Christian churches and places of worship[7].

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1 Sani Tukur, *Shocking Revelation: 100,000 Killed, Two Million Displaced by Boko Haram Insurgency, Borno Governor Says*, PREMIUM TIMES (13 Feb. 2017), https://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/headlines/223399-shocking-revelation-100000-killed-two-million-displaced-boko-haram-insurgency-borno-governor-says.html.

2 Lindy Lowry, *In Nigeria, 39 Killed in Fulani Herdsmen Massacres—Chrisitans Cry Out 'Enough Bloodshed'*, OPEN DOORS USA (2 May 2018), https://www.opendoorsusa.org/christian-persecution/stories/in-nigeria-39-killed-in-fulani-herdsmen-massacres-christians-cry-out-enough-bloodshed/.

3 U.N. Charter art. 1, para. 1 (emphasis added).

4 Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, art. VIII, Dec. 9, 1948, 78 U.N.T.S. 277.

5 *The World Factbook*, CENT. INTELLIGENCE AGENCY, https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ni.html (last visited 7 Aug. 2018).

6 *Nigeria's Boko Haram Crisis: Maiduguri 'Preachers Kill Dozens'*, BBC NEWS (5 June 2014), https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-27716898.

7 Monica Mark, *Boko Haram's 'Deadliest Massacre': 2000 Feared Dead in Nigeria*, THE GUARDIAN (10 Jan. 2015, 5:42 AM), https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/jan/09/boko-haram-deadliest-massacre-baga-nigeria.

The Fulani Herdsman also pose a deadly and growing threat to Christians living in Nigeria. Since January 2018, the Fulani Herdsman have murdered approximately 6,000 Christians, many of whom were women and children. The International Society for Civil Liberties and Rule of Law, Intersociety stated:

> Nigeria is drifting to [a path of] genocide through killing, maiming, burning, and destruction of churches and other sacred places of worship, and forceful seizure and occupation of ancestral, worship, farming, and dwelling lands of indigenous Christians and other indigenous religionists in Northern Nigeria[8].

If the current rate of slaughter continues within Nigeria, it is estimated that Christians will be completely eradicated within Nigeria by 2043. The Secretary of the National Christian Elders Forum, Bosun Emmanuel, stated, 'Realistically speaking, Christianity is on the brink of extinction in Nigeria. The ascendency of Sharia ideology in Nigeria rings the death toll for the Nigerian Church'[9].

On 24 April 2018, members of the Fulani Herdsman opened fire in Catholic Church during Mass, killing 17 worshippers and 2 priests. Following the attack, Nigerian President Muhammadu Buhari stated, 'This latest assault on innocent persons is particularly despicable. Violating a place of worship, killing priests and worshippers is not only vile, evil, and satanic, it is clearly calculated to stoke up religious conflict and plunge our communities into endless bloodletting'[10].

The following day, another group of Fulani Herdsman dressed in military camo and carrying AK-47s attacked villages 40 miles from where the attack on the church had just occurred. This new attack resulted in the deaths of 39 Christians. Village resident Alice Terwase described the attack:

> The herdsman destroyed more than 60 houses in our village, and three members of my community were also killed in the attack . . . at Tse-Ali village, more than 70 houses were set ablaze and 21 Christians killed. All affected victims are members of the NKST [Universal Reformed Christian Church, or *Nongu u Kristu u i Ser u sha Tar*] Church, and the Roman Catholic Church in the affected Communities[11].

In order to protect the citizens of Nigeria and to ensure more innocent lives are not lost, the government of Nigeria as well as the International Community must take immediate action.

3. Request

The U.N. Charter calls on the U.N. to remove threats to peace, and the Genocide Convention calls on the U.N. to *prevent* acts of genocide not merely to respond to genocide. We have seen in Iraq and in the Syrian Arab Republic what happens when the U.N. fails to take preventive measures when it is clear that mass atrocities are being carried out against a particular group of people. This is only the beginning. If meaningful action is not taken now, the problem in Nigeria will only worsen and Boko Haram will begin spreading to neighbouring countries. ISIS and ISIS affiliate groups, like Boko Haram, have shown their resiliency time and time again. When they are forced out of one area they flee in order to regroup and fight another day[12].

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8 Stoyan Zaimov, *'Pure Genocide': Over 6,000 Nigerian Christians Slaughtered, Mostly Women and Children*, THE CHRISTIAN POST (3 July 2018, 7:42 AM), https://www.christianpost.com/news/pure-genocide-over-6000-nigerian-christians-slaughtered-mostly-women-children-225655/.

9 Stoyan Zaimov, *Christians Could be Killed off in Nigeria by 2043 if Massacres Continue, Leaders Warn*, THE CHRISTIAN POST (25 Jun3 2018, 7:50 AM), https://www.christianpost.com/news/christians-could-be-killed-off-in-nigeria-by-2043-if-massacres-continue-leaders-warn-225329/.

10 *Nigeria's President Decries 'Satanic' Massacre of 18, Including Two Priests, in Catholic Church*, SOUTH CHINA MORNING POST, (25 Apr. 2018, 2:20 PM), http://www.scmp.com/news/world/africa/article/2143261/nigerias-president-decries-satanic-massacre-18-including-two.

11 *Muslim Extremists Murder 39 Christians in Benue State, Nigeria*, MORNING STAR NEWS (26 Apr. 2018), https://www.christianheadlines.com/blog/muslim-extremists-murder-39-christians-in-benue-state-nigeria.html.

12 Tyler Hicks, *Resilience of ISIS and Its Branches*, NEW YORK TIMES (27 Oct. 2016), https://www.nytimes.com/2016/10/28/world/africa/boko-haram-isis-nigeria-niger.html.

This Council must swiftly mobilise in order to prevent these atrocities from escalating to the scale of those atrocities we have seen occur in both Iraq and Syria. We must take action now in order to stop the growing humanitarian crisis and prevent more people from becoming displaced.

This is why we respectfully request that this Council work with the government of Nigeria in order to protect the people who are vulnerable to being attacked by preventing further attacks, prosecuting those who are responsible for these brutal atrocities, and providing aid and assistance to the victims.